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The Continental Drift

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THE CONTINENTAL DRIFT

I've been listening
and I think I get it. In the beginning
we were all close, shared the ground
cover, the oak and the ivy together, and the palm,
apples growing with oranges on one hill, the same.
Elephants would roam America,
ostriches would settle in France.

But we let go.
Whether it was like quickie divorce
or a file of unanswered letters, unanswerable letters,
or the ocean pleading its special case
to each soft, reliable coast,
we moved apart.
Africa kept the elephants. We got
the lessons of the oak.

Still it is obvious
how the shapes fit: how any map teases.
I try to read things into it. I try to figure
the message of the Alleghenies, the mottled
America that comes to the edge of the Midwest
and freezes:
where everything is portioned and nothing looks casual,
where there is nothing to stop it until the Rockies.